

A Smurfin' Good Time

I was so pleasantly surprised by how much my family liked the new Smurf movie that I was inspired to write a short review. Going in, I thought I would hate the movie because it didn't look funny. And I was a fan of the Smurfs as a kid, so not only did the movie look stupid, but I couldn't figure out why it took place in our realm rather than the Smurf's realm – wouldn't fans of the little blue mystical creatures, kids, and everyone else want to see Smurf village on the big screen?

Don't worry, we get to see Smurf village, and it's pretty cool. Especially the scene where Gargamel breaks in!! Ok, so I guess that's kind of a spoiler, sorry about that... but this is a kid's movie we're talking about. And kid's movie it is – my kids all really liked it (ages 11, 7, 4 and 3). The Smurfs have screen time for pretty much 100% of the movie, and there aren't any boring scenes with a lot of dialogue – these tend to lose the attention of kids. There are some Smurfy jokes – in this case I'm using "Smurfy" to describe inside jokes written for fans of the Smurfs from decades ago. Much like the Brady Bunch movies are actually enjoyable parodies of the hit tv show and poke fun at it, The Smurfs movie has gags about such shout-outs to the 80s cartoon as their names reflecting their personalities (a hilarious joke in the movie that I'm still chuckling about), cracks about how Smurfette always wears the same dress (although more than one joke about this was overdoing it and took the humor away), and multiple references to creator Peyo.



(the Smurfs as I knew and loved them)

From the previews, I thought Gargamel was going to be a bumbling bafoon, one of these over-the-top characters who might be ruined by the actor portraying him as he flailed around aimlessly in a ridiculous looking costume. But Gargamel as a live person in today's New York City was actually quite entertaining and even hilarious at times (If you grew up watching the Smurf cartoon like I did, watch for the way Hank Azaria runs as he portrays Gargamel – he imitates the cartoon character so well that it made me laugh out loud!). I especially liked the inclusion of the little details from the cartoon – like seeing the Smurf cages that Gargamel always had lying in wait for when he finally caught the little guys. There was backstory explained; everyone knows by now that Smurfette was actually created by Gargamel as Smurf bait, right? The story line was cheesy but not unbearable even while it made several futile attempts at teaching positive life lessons to kids in the audience. I could have done without the Katy Perry song reference (is “I Kissed a Girl really a song for kids? I’ve never heard the song and don’t want to know), and Katy Perry as Smurfette’s voice didn’t really give any personality to the character anyhow – she was just a girl Smurf and nothing like her character in the cartoon. Clumsy Smurf on the other hand, was a perfect 3d replica of his cartoon counterpart – both in voice and graphics. I did stop watching the Smurfs sometime after the Smurf cousins (Smurflings) came in, so I have no

idea where Gutsy Smurf came from (seems to be a brave Scottish Smurf complete with red sideburns and a kilt?). I would have liked to see my personal favorite Smurf, Jokey, get more screen time in the movie. On that subject, I don't understand why the group of 6 Smurfs with the most screen time (the ones who get to go to NY) did not include such series regulars as Jokey, Greedy, Handy, Vanity or Hefty. Actually, I didn't see those Smurfs at all, but then again, we arrived late to the movie so maybe I missed their appearances. The production staff also did an excellent job of utilizing aspects of modern technology to make funny jokes involving the Smurfs. Case in point: see the wikipedia reference.



(My favorite Smurf, Jokey)

Overall, Smurfs was an entertaining film for the entire family – and there was a huge gap between my low expectations and my high level of enjoyment of this cute movie! A must-see for anyone who has kids to take to a movie – bonus if you are a Smurf fan!

One more note – here is a list of characters I would like to see in the sequel:

Hogatha, Johan and Peewit, Clockwork Smurf, and Baby Smurf. But please, NO SMURFLINGS!!

And oh yeah... I did a search on my own blog to see if I had written about the I'm a Pink Toothbrush song from the Smurf's 1979 album. Turns out, I did include it in a [blog post that I had written in March 2010](#), and my kids (and me still!) are big fans of this adorable tune. It was really fun to read about my speculations on the Smurf movie in this blog post given the limited info I had that time on this "in production" project! (if you read it, you should know that Quentin Tarentino was

originally cast as Brainy Smurf, but both actor and studio are quiet on why the pairing did not work out...) So apparently I HAD heard of Gutsy Smurf – and wrote about it in my own blog a year and a half ago!



(modern Smurfs from the 2011 movie)

More of last week's news...

When mentioning costumes for the 5th grade class I subbed for last week, I forgot to mention one other costume. Or two, rather, though only one of them was in my class. It is strange it slipped my mind because this boy was wearing a video-game-related costume which was very good. He came as Mario, complete in the right colors with hat, large white cartoon gloves, and of course, mustache (though this piece kept falling off). I mentioned to him that with his build he might have made a good Luigi too, but his costume did have the extra padding to make him pudgy ala Mario. During the costume show, who walked across the stage with (I think) a third-grade class but Luigi, which from a distance also looked pretty good. When our Mario waved to him I figured they were brothers, but when I asked him about it the only fraternal relationship was in the characters, so this just made for a cool coincidence.

I said I would mention Friday night, so I am finally getting around to it. Friday night was our second annual movie night

for 4th and 5th grade. Last year we saw the excellent [Meet the Robinsons](#). This year was [Bolt](#). Having never seen this movie before I was looking forward to it even if I wouldn't really get to see if I had to keep too much of a watchful eye on the kids (as it happily turns out, my fears here were unfounded and I was able to watch the whole thing). Before the movie, however, there was game and pizza time. This year they separated the boys and the girls so one group was playing games while the other ate. We started out in the gym. There was a fun game set up called "the gauntlet" but before we did that we warmed up with another game, link tag. No, this has nothing to do with:

[collegehumor]<https://www.collegehumor.com/video:1923420>[/collegehumor]

though that's a hilarious Family Guy-esque video (click to see it in a larger size). It is a game with one (or a few) runner(s) and one (or a few) tagger(s) with the rest spread out, standing linked in pairs. At any time the runner can link up with one pair and the person on the opposite side would become a new runner so the pair doesn't become a trio. If the tagger tags the runner, the runner becomes the tagger and the former tagger links up with a pair and a new person becomes the runner. I think we had played this before a couple of years ago, calling it squirrel tag. After this game came- The Gauntlet. This is just as insidious as it sounds. The kids have to run through a course, going over or under as the course dictates, while trying to avoid getting hit by balls thrown by us leaders (heh, heh...). If hit, they would have to go back to the beginning. For those of you crying "aww, no fair for the kids," don't worry- they got their turn getting back at us. I didn't make it very far...

So for food time, we had pizza. I was expecting the variety made in our church's kitchen, but it turned out they ordered from Little Caesars. The parents had to pay for this event, so why not? This was the time where we leaders got to hang

out with a few boys sitting together, thereby selecting our small groups for the end of the night. After the boys grabbed their dinner, I waited a minute or so before grabbing my own and sitting down with four boys. There were almost a dozen guy leaders, so the small groups were quite small. There were more girls and fewer girl leaders present, so their groups I understand were a bit larger. Did I mention this was an outreach event? The kids were encouraged to invite friends who didn't normally come to our church, so it turned out that two of these boys were such invitees. In fact, both were invited by one of the other boys, but all four actually knew each other from school. After a brief time in conversation with them, it was time for the movie. We cleaned up and headed to the learning center where the movie was shown on two screens. We were supposed to sit with our groups, but the boys kind of crowded together, so I sat in the row right in front of them instead. Don't worry, the seating was tiered and the screens high up besides so I didn't block their view.

□

As I wrote, we were able to enjoy the whole movie with no more distraction than some kids going to the bathroom now and again. They even provided popcorn for the whole movie experience. Now, I typically say I don't like popcorn all that much, but it is strange that I typically find myself eating it anyway, and this night was no exception. While not in the same class as Meet the Robinsons IMHO, I still enjoyed this movie about a dog raised thinking his "human" was a spy constantly threatened by the evil Dr. Calico (with his evil cats of course) and that he was a superhero- managing to escape from his trailer, he heads out on a mission to save his human whom he thought was captured (they ended the day's shooting on this cliffhanger) but in fact headed home as this was after all just a TV show no matter what Bolt was raised to believe.

Finally, Pastor Steve came out and talked a little, focusing

on superheroes and how God is the only superhero. It was just a bit more exciting than what I just wrote, but you get the idea. We then broke into our small groups and talked some more about it, ending with handing out Gospel tracts that folds in several ways to reveal the message. I actually picked up a fifth boy who hadn't been selected already by another leader so I may have ended up with the largest boy's group of the night. I felt the discussion went very well. The two visitors actually attended different churches, so they weren't as green as expected in an outreach event, but that was okay as I'm sure everyone still picked up something from the small group, especially on sharing Christ with others if they had already had a relationship with Him.

It was a great night- I can't wait for Winterblast in a few months- the overnigher at the church. The only disappointing time was seeing another fifth-grade boy at the church with his mom for a single-parents meeting who chose to not attend movie night because the ones he wanted to invite were not in 4th or 5th grade, which I learned was sort of a limit in this event though not strictly enforced.

More youtube

Take a look at this trailer for the 1951 version of Raiders of the Lost Ark (click the video to go directly to youtube for a larger version)!

What, there was no such version you say? So what was was this then since the actors are real 50s stars? Give up? Go to [this youtube link](#) that breaks it down for you. ☐

Incidentally, this isn't this guy's first work on a trailer like this. [Click here](#) to see a couple more goodies.

The IMAX almost non-experience



Well, I did it. I paid the extra bucks to go see Star Trek in IMAX. As expected, the screen was large, though not superhuge like at Great America when I was growing up (dunno if the screen is still there). I also noticed that it was curved, but failed to notice if it was silver. I would guess yes since they bothered to curve it. Why to I mention this? Well, because 3D movies utilize a silver, curved screen. While this was not a 3D movie, there are many IMAX movies that are also 3D, so I would presume this theater is just set up for them when they happen. Back to topic, once there a half-hour early, the good seats in the theater were already starting to fill up. I did notice though that they tended to sit not in the true center, but rather the center of the visible image which was not centered but toward the left. The commercials weren't in IMAX and probably utilized a different projector entirely. Once 4:00 rolled around, they dimmed the lights and switched to IMAX for the previews and movie. Well, they tried. The audio came out crystal clear, but- no picture. At first I though this was a preview that just started dark then the picture would kick in at just the right

moment, but after a minute (less, really) it became clear the picture wasn't coming at all. They eventually stopped it, and I could see several shadows on the screen from the projection area as they tried to figure out the problem. After several minutes they got a picture going, but one that was a little out of focus, or rather some color separation. I heard something move into place and the picture became clear. Wait, how could I hear it when a preview was going you ask? Because now it was a picture with no sound! They froze the picture and worked another few minutes. Finally, the Harry Potter preview could be seen *and* heard. Boy, could it be heard- volume a wee bit too high. It started with color separation again, but once again that was quickly resolved and we were on our way. We only did see the tail end of the one preview before the movie, and also a commercial which also served as a "silent your cellphone" reminder, but I was just fine with that! By the time the movie started, the volume level was fine as well.

So, about the movie. As a Trek fan, I found this movie very enjoyable. JustJ pretty much [covered the basics](#), so I won't go there, but I can see how most of the differences would be plausible as (highlight to reveal spoiler) an altered timeline can explain the discrepancies. Besides JustJ's one rant, there was a big nitpick I had toward the end though where they used a technology known to be in the next generation but not in the original series (highlight to reveal spoiler rant:)

Eject the warp core? Really?? What with the change the Romulan ship made would cause the Federation to develop an ejectable warp core so early? Nothing I saw.

I also see why (highlight... well, you know) they left the new timeline alone rather than fix it, so they can feel unencumbered by Star Trek canon when making future movies. Next Generation, Deep Space 9, and Voyager? (you know what to do) All in the old timeline now. Who knows what the future will now bring for the Federation? Oh, one more thing- (yep,

again) did anyone else think of the Death Star when they saw you-know-which-planet destroyed?

One slight nitpick left, one I've had since *The Next Generation*- while some may think it's sexist which is why they changed it in the first place, to be PC, but I really think *...where no man has gone before* fits better than *...where no one has gone before*. Why? Simply put, at least "man" can only mean human, if only just half the population, while "one" refers to everyone- human, vulcan, klingon, and every species they have not yet met. They are going where no *human* has been, or no *Federation citizen*, but most places have had someone go there before- the local sentient life, whoever they may be. So, a slight nitpick but valid I think.

Was it worth the extra price to see it in IMAX? Maybe. Once they got it together over there it really did look nice, and Star Trek is just the type of show to look great on the large screen. Certainly I wouldn't go to see just any show in IMAX, but for this one I think I can say I was glad to see it in IMAX. The only other show this year I know for certain I will see in the theater is Harry Potter 6, but I think I will save money on that and see it in the local theater. I wonder if the price is still under \$7? I'll find out.

My New Pet

I've wanted a new pet for awhile, mostly since my cat passed away almost a year ago now. What I want most is another cat – I love cats, and it would be the perfect type of pet for our household. But unfortunately, I'm allergic to cats. When I had my cat, it was a constant struggle to decide if I should pet her or not. I always wanted to of course, but then I

would itch for hours, my eyes would water, and sometimes I'd get hives. And, my allergy symptoms were worse during my 4 pregnancies. I just don't want to go through that again – so no cat for us. We have a Jack Russell Terrier mix, so any type of animal she'll want to chase and bark at is out also – which means no rats, ferrets, small birds, etc. So that leaves me with reptiles or bugs, I guess. And the only reptile I'm interested in owning is a tortoise. Those can be kind of costly and I'm not entirely sure that my Jerk Russell Terrier mix won't want to hunt it, so I'm going to hold off on the tortoise for a little bit. Also complicating the situation is that I really don't have any extra time to spend with a pet, so that limits my options even further. So lately I've been in limbo, trying to decide what to get. But the other day, a new pet sort of fell into my lap.

It's a ladybug I found in the house – normally I'd let any bugs go outside that I find in the house, but it's way too cold out for a ladybug, and I don't want him to suffer while he froze to death. So I looked up what ladybugs eat, and I found out that their favorite food is aphids, which are an even smaller group of insects. Knowing I couldn't get any of those easily, I put a drop of honey in a little container with the ladybug. He went over to it and started eating it! So I put a little drop of water in there too, and he must have smelled that or something, because he left the honey and went over to the water – it was really interesting to watch. He's survived in captivity about a week now, and I have to say I'm getting a little attached to him as a pet. It started out as just a fun little project, and I didn't expect it to live more than a few days. But he did, and I've named him Francis (like the ladybug from *A Bug's Life*), and he is my secret pet – the kids don't know about him. If they did, he'd be dead already because my 4-year-old adores bugs and often smothers them with love – literally. I think today I'll go out and get Francis some grass for his container, because earlier when I fed him, he REFUSED to go back into his container! I'm not

kidding; he was sticking to my finger and just doing everything possible to not get locked back in there. Finally, I put him on a Q-tip and cut it to fit in the container and locked him in. I feel a little badly that I've kidnapped this ladybug, but I think I'm his only chance at life. Outside, he'd freeze, and if I let him go into my house, I don't think he'd be able to find food and water and he'd either die or go into hibernation until a kid or a dog got him.

So anyway, I guess I have my new pet. I still don't expect him to last very long, but for now it's fun just taking care of an animal, especially since he's my little secret. If he's still around in another week or so, I'll take his picture and post it. Say hi to Francis!

Searching for a movie

Well, I just got off the phone after talking to my 'lil sister. She was wondering about a movie she saw some time during the 60's on Television. Not knowing the title of the movie, or any actors that stared in it will make it difficult if not impossible to find out anything about it.

Story line as far as we know:

Some guy (could be a prince) has to find a blue rose to save the girl (could be a princess) from certain death. Evil guy tries to stop good guy from finding rose to save girl. Eventually rose is found, girl is saved, everyone (except the evil guy) lives happily ever after.

So far I've found a movie called [The Blue Rose](#), made in 2007. Not that one. Another movie, [with the same title](#) was a silent film made in 1913. Not that one either.

I'm leaning toward a movie called [The Thief of Bagdad](#), but since I don't remember it, this may not be the one. It was released in 1961, and I'm not sure how long it would take to make it to TV. The plot summary (you have to dig for it) is almost exactly what I was told. This movie was a remake of [one made in 1940](#). One should really check this one out for the names of the characters. You could almost call Disney Studios, Thieves of the Thieves of Bagdad. And one more movie with the same title, but I'm sure 'lil Sister would have remembered this one, since it starred [Douglas Fairbanks as the Thief](#).

If it isn't one of these movies, I will have to continue my search at a later date.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Another Thanksgiving weekend is upon us, and so far it's been wonderful for us. Thanksgiving dinner was deliciously cooked by my husband and our guests who were kind enough to bring yummy dishes to share. We played some games afterwards and watched the movie "21" -not very Thanksgiving-y, but a good movie nonetheless. The night before Thanksgiving, my husband and I watched some Thanksgiving episodes of Friends – I think I had forgotten how funny that show was. It's strange because now when we watch Friends episodes, we are older than the Friends, whereas when the show was still running new in prime time, the friends were older than us... oh well, yet another example of how time flies. Over the turkey last night, we also did our tradition where we go around the table and say what we're thankful for – and my ever-generic answer was the same as some of my friends, "I am most thankful for my family and friends." It may be a generic response, but it's very true, and I am very blessed to have such a wonderful family

(my husband and kids and our relatives who live far away – we hope everyone had a wonderful day) and such great friends.

So now, Black Friday is upon us, and I was able to convince my husband to not go shopping. Every year, he wants to get up at the crack of dawn, if not before, and go wait in the lines to see the best sales stores have to offer. But I'm never very enthused, mostly because we have 4 children under the age of 9. I keep telling him to put it on his "when our kids aren't so little" list, although I have one that's lengthy enough for the both of us. It'd be nice if one year we could get a babysitter for Black Friday so we wouldn't have to wake all the kids up, but until that happens, I'm not willing to lose the sleep myself or have the kids lose it either. So today for Black Friday, I've already had my first turkey-and-leftover sandwich, and we're going to take the kids to see Bolt (our two oldest girls are excited to hear the voicework of Miley Cyrus) at the movie theater with a friend and her grandkids. We haven't been to a movie in forever. I just hope our 2-year-old can behave. After the movie, we'll walk across the street for dinner, and then we'll go see if Santa's reindeer have arrived on the square before we get our spots to watch the parade. Every year on the day after Thanksgiving, our town has a parade celebrating Santa's arrival. They bring real reindeer to the square, and everyone lines the streets in anticipation of seeing Santa Claus come to town. His sleigh is pulled by huge beautiful horses, and last year, Santa called out hello to us and knew us by name! When Santa reaches the town square, a few lucky children get to push the big button that turns on the Christmas lights on the square, and everyone cheers as they sip their complimentary cups of hot chocolate. It's like something out of a cheesy holiday movie, and I relish every minute of it. I don't know who is more excited today -me or the kids! I love small town life! And right now, as I'm writing this, I just saw Santa's sleigh (covered of course) get pulled down our street with a golf cart! I excitedly yelled out, but thank goodness the kids

didn't come down here in time to see it – I think it'd be better for them to see it for the first time in the parade. It was exciting for me to see though!

I'm not sure what the rest of the weekend holds, but I do know that I get twice as much time with my husband and kids as a normal weekend, and for that I'm also very thankful. I hope everyone else had a wonderful holiday!

If I Didn't Know Any Better...

I'd think these are the same person:

The Cowardly Lion, fictional movie character, 1939



Drew Peterson, suspected wife murderer, 2008



I got an email a few months ago comparing a bunch of people's faces to other pictures. It was funny to see the resemblance between people you wouldn't have otherwise thought about – like the two pictured above.

For those of you who don't know, Drew Peterson is a former police officer who lives in the suburbs of Chicago. He is somewhat of a celebrity these days because his young 4th wife Stacy went missing over a year ago. During the search for her, his 3rd wife's body was exhumed and another autopsy was performed. Following this autopsy, they changed the 3rd wife's cause of death from accidental drowning to homicide. This and other aspects of this case always point to Drew being responsible for some sort of foul play on Stacy. The man is very smug, and some of the things he's said to the media are shockingly rude and callous toward Stacy. He is an infamous jerk, and I think he actually likes the public and media attention. I've take an interest in the case because I'm originally from the area where they lived, and during the national coverage of this case, I follow along, knowing the towns and areas they're talking about. Drew was on the Dr. Phil show the other day, and he was smug as ever... He is in court currently on a weapons charge, and I got the idea to compare his picture to the cowardly lion when someone posted a comment on the story on dailyherald.com – good observation! If I can dig out that original email comparing the pictures, I

should post it on my blog and add these two to the email!

The Haunting of Molly Hartley

Even though our car is out of commission, we were still able to get out to vote yesterday with our rental car, courtesy of our car warranty. I have to say that after years of driving a loaded mini-van, I kind of enjoy zipping around in the little Malibu they gave us. My husband pointed out that it's probably because all the kids won't even fit in it, so for the first time in a long time, I find myself alone in the car, which means blaring country music of my choosing rather than listening to kids fighting, KidsSongs, or Veggie Tales. He's probably right; although I do enjoy the quick pick-up and the fact that I can easily back out from any parking spot I find myself wedged into. So anyway, the movie theater in the neighboring town was offering free popcorn to those who voted in the election yesterday. They had a movie called, "[The Haunting of Molly Hartley](#)", which I hadn't heard about. But the title sounded promising, as did the fact that the movie came out on Halloween. But then I looked it up on imdb.com, and it had a 3.8 rating. Ouch – that's a pretty stinky rating! Not only that, but examples of users' comments on the movie include: "What's the point of this movie?" "Don't worry about getting up for a snack, you won't miss anything." "A fright fest without the scares." "Reminds me a of a Nickleodeon movie." – you get the idea.

But we decided to see it anyway, and I'm glad we did. It really wasn't that bad – it even has replay value; I'd watch it again. The plot centers around a young girl named Molly who, days before her 18th birthday, begins to have episodes characterized by nosebleeds, anxiety attacks, and

hearing voices. She is really worried that she is “going crazy”, especially given her mother’s mental instability. The audience doesn’t really know if everything is just in this girl’s head because of past trauma or if there is really more to it. I would describe the movie as [Rosemary’s Baby](#) meets [Proof](#) (I’ve only seen the stage play, not the movie though). In *Rosemary’s Baby*, a woman is having a baby and is paranoid that her neighbors are demons who will harm the baby. The movie is done in such a way that the audience is left guessing the entire time if she’s just being paranoid or if her concerns are legit. And *Proof* is the story of a woman who is following in the footsteps of her mathematical genius father, only to worry if she is also inheriting his mental illness.

And I disagree with some of the comments made about the *Haunting of Molly Hartley* – there were plenty of scares. The movie had a creepy mood to it, and there were plenty of jump-out-of-your-seat startles. They were quite predictable, but I’ve seen lots of scary movies, so the predictability of the scares probably had lots to do with my experience of knowing when to expect them. Overall, I’d definitely recommend this movie to people who like horror movies. I liked it much better than [Saw V](#), and they’re really two different types of movie since unlike the entire *Saw* franchise, this one had no gore and was rated PG-13. Apparently it was too tame and lame for teenagers, which scares me to think about what it must take to shock teenagers these days. But for grown-up thrill movie fans, it’s worth a view!

High School Musical 3

I have seen *High School Musical 3*, and I want to see it again! It’s like *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* all over

again. Only, I think I was a little worse with Star Wars. I knew how many hours and minutes to Star Wars, and I wasn't quite that bad with HSM 3. There were many surprises in this movie and I couldn't stop laughing. Okay, of course there were some parts that you didn't want to laugh, but I'm pretty sure you get the idea. It's just a fun, relaxing, and entertaining show! There are some new characters, that I think they plan on using in the next High School Musical if they do a fourth one. I don't think I'll want to watch anymore if there are different people. It just wouldn't be the same! I normally don't watch sequels if there are different people playing main characters. As I sat in my seat at the movie theater, I didn't feel as if it was as late as it was getting. You were absorbed in the show and you lost track of time. Troy and Gabriella have three duets in this movie, and you can really see that Zac and Vanessa (for anyone who doesn't know, those are the actors) really love each other through the way they act. You can just see it in the way they are able to act with each other so well. It must have meant so much to them when they sang those songs, and were together. I have the CD now. As soon as the movie was over, we headed to Tony's house, so I could get my money and he took me to Wal-Mart to get the CD. I can't wait to be able to see it again! When is it coming out on DVD?!?!